

BECOMING

By

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INT. THEATER - NIGHT

An unstable, baby-faced SAM (26) shakes as he points his gun with both hands. LILY (28), a redhead dressed in a 1970s nurse uniform, finally breaks the silence.

LILY
Your mom was sick. I couldn't--

SAM
You killed her.

LILY
I did everything I--

SAM
Shut up!

LILY
Please, don't do this.

SAM
You're making me do this.

Sam twitches. Sam puts his finger on the trigger. TOM (58), the play's director, throws his binder.

TOM
Cut!

The lights come up to reveal the stage and theater. Sam returns to his softer self, breaking character. In light, the gun is visibly fake.

TOM
I don't believe you. For Christ's sake, we open tomorrow.

SAM
I'm sorr--

Tom gives Sam the hand, then turns around to collect himself. JEN (42) pops onstage to place some set pieces. She swaps out Sam's gun. He inspects it.

SAM
Is this real?

Jen winks. Tom whips back around.

TOM
To you, everything's real. Until we go dark, everything. is. real. Okay? Now, let's go. Back to one.

(CONTINUED)

Everything re-sets. The lights go down. Whispering spills into Sam's head.

LILY
Your mom was sick. I couldn't--

SAM
You killed her.

LILY
I did everything I--

SAM
Shut up!

LILY
Please, don't do this.

The whispering paralyzes Sam. A FIGURE leans into his ear.

FIGURE
She could've saved her.

Sam grips the trigger. Lily looks at him, waiting. She can't hear the whispering.

LILY
Uh...y-you don't have to do this.
Just--

SAM
I said shut the fuck up!

Lily looks to Tom in the audience. Sam's unraveling. The figure on stage yells.

TOM
Just fucking kill her, you pussy!

Sam screams and hurls himself at Lily, tackling her to the ground. He's gripping her neck and pointing the gun at her.

SAM
You did this! You killed her!

TOM
Cut!

Sam doesn't let go. The lights come on.

TOM
I said *cut*, goddamnit!

Lily breaks free, gasping for air. The whispering stops and Sam returns to reality.

LILY
What the fuck, Sam?

SAM
I-I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I don't know what happened.

LILY
This is why you don't cast someone unchained. Jesus!

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

As Sam ties his shoes, his eyes dart between the gun on the prop table and on Lily and Tom arguing. Tom storms away from Lily, coming toward Sam.

TOM
I don't give a fuck what you have to do, but get your shit together by tomorrow.

Sam picks up the gun. He hears Lily coming. He puts the gun in the back of his pants before Lily reaches him.

LILY
Asshole.

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam passes a bodega and is steps away from his front door. A stray cat jumps out, rubbing up against Sam's legs.

SAM
Not today, Lou. C'mon. Get off.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Warm. Family photos line the walls, featuring an innocent, wholesome version of Sam. His boyfriend MICHAEL (30) sits down for dinner when teary-eyed Sam spills in.

MICHAEL
Hey...you're home?

(CONTINUED)

SAM

Yep.

MICHAEL

What's going on?

SAM

I have to practice.

Sam walks past and goes to the guest bedroom, slamming the door shut behind him.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sam presses his back against the door, squeezing his eyes shut.

SAM

(to himself)

The fuck's wrong with you? Why can't you fucking get this?

Sam slaps himself across the face.

MEMORY FLASH - Sam's at the hospital. The IV drips. He takes his dying mom's hand. This isn't on stage.

Sam starts pacing.

MEMORY FLASH - Sam calls for help, still sitting next to his mom. Doctors and nurses storm in.

Sam continues pacing and hitting himself.

MEMORY FLASH - Tom is on stage, yelling at Sam. They're both facing Lily and are surrounded by other doctors and nurses.

SAM

Come on, you son of a bitch.

MEMORY FLASH - Sam's drunk DAD (56) sits in a recliner in his living room, half conscious. Sam, dressed in a black suit, gently places his hand on his dad's arm. His dad starts a fight.

All of the memory flashes rapidly cycle through Sam's head as the whispering becomes unbearable, like before. Sam whips out the gun and points it right at Lily, who is standing in the corner of the bedroom.

(CONTINUED)

LILY

I'm sorry. We did everything we could.

The figure returns to Sam's ear. It's Tom.

TOM

G'head.

Tom puts his hand over Sam's.

TOM

Shh, shh, shh.

Sam screams, but is interrupted by a knock at the door. Lily, Tom, and the whispering vanish.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Sam?

SAM

No...no, no, no.

Sam crumbles to the floor.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Babe?

SAM

I had it.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Why don't you take the rest of the night off? Come eat something, then we can--

SAM

Please, just give me a fucking minute.

Sam cries. Michael's shadow disappears.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael sleeps soundly. Sam lies wide awake. His dad smokes a cigarette in the dark corner.

DAD

Never were much of a fighter, were ya? Maybe if I roughened you up a bit more, things would've turned out different.

(CONTINUED)

Sam gets out of bed and leaves the room.

DAD

Pussy.

INT. BODEGA - NIGHT

Sam walks from the freezers with a drink to the CASHIER (22), who has blazing red hair, like Lily.

FLASH - Sam sees Lily instead of the cashier. The whispering slowly returns.

CASHIER

That all?

SAM

Can I get a pack of Marlboro?

CASHIER

We don't got those. Want Camelbacks?

SAM

Sure.

She turns around to get the cigarettes. Sam gawks at the back of her head. Tom watches from across the bodega. Sam reaches into his bag and grabs the gun. The whispering continues to crescendo. The cashier turns back to Sam.

CASHIER

\$16.75. Cash or credit?

She waits for an answer. Sam releases the gun and pulls out his wallet.

EXT. BODEGA - NIGHT

Sam rushes out, passing Tom. It's almost as if the whispering hurts Sam.

TOM

The fuck was that, huh?

SAM

Go away.

Sam makes it back to his house. The cat is back. Tom is always ahead of Sam. Tom's blocking his stoop.

(CONTINUED)

TOM
She was right there! *She* killed
your fucking mom.

SAM
I know!

TOM
I should've known you couldn't do
it.

Sam's dad appears out of nowhere, still smoking the
cigarette.

DAD
Don't beat yourself up. The kid's
always been trouble.

The stray cat meows. Sam turns red and shoots them a "watch
this" look. He snatches up the cat and storms inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sam holds the cat in his lap, putting his hands around its
neck. Tom places his hand on Sam's shoulder. He looks to the
sky with his bloodshot eyes, and breaks the cat's neck.
Silence. Solitude. Relief. He looks at the dead cat and
softly smiles.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Michael screams, waking Sam up.

MICHAEL
What the fuck?

Sam looks at the dead cat as if he'd never seen it before.

SAM
I-I'm sorry. I--

MICHAEL
Who are you?

SAM
Baby, it's me.

MICHAEL
Jesus Christ. I thought you getting
this part was gonna be a fresh
start.

(CONTINUED)

SAM

It was just a character.

MICHAEL

This isn't a fucking theater, Sam!
I can't. I can't do this anymore.

SAM

Mikey.

Sam reaches for his arm, but Michael pulls away.

MICHAEL

I tried. I really did, but ever
since your mom died--

SAM

We're not talking about that.

Without even noticing, Sam's body language shifts into
character.

MICHAEL

Well when are we gonna talk about
it? What? After you kill--

Sam grabs Michael's shirt and gets in his face.

SAM

I said we're not fucking talking
about it!

They're face to face, silent. Sam becomes lucid.

MICHAEL

Get out.

SAM

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to.

MICHAEL

Get. Out.

Sam's tenderness fully vanishes.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - MORNING

Sam aggressively wanders around the neighborhood with his
backpack.

DAY TO NIGHT

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - NIGHT

As day turns to night, the whispering returns. Sam sees the cashier leaving her shift.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Opening night chaos erupts. The director bounces from person to person.

TOM

Have you seen Sam? Have you seen him? Jesus. Has anyone seen our fucking lead?

RAPIDLY INTERCUT

BEAT - Sam follows the cashier. He's losing control of his body, excessively twitching, gripping his bag tight.

BEAT - The backstage chaos continues.

STAGE MANAGER

We have to call curtain soon.

TOM

Stall.

BEAT - The cashier notices Sam following her and picks up her speed.

BEAT - Lily is getting final touches near the prop table. She realizes that the gun is missing.

BEAT - The whispering intensity peaks. Backstage rumbles. Sam makes final steps toward the cashier and pulls out the gun.

SAM

Hey!

She turns around and he shoots her. The whispering is gone, but what's left is a high frequency from the gun shot. Sam experiences such a grand euphoria, his vision blurs. A muffled applause erupts. Sam looks off to the distance.

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

A full audience roars. Sam stands in the spotlight, center stage. He looks through the glaring spotlights to meet eyes with Michael, who isn't clapping. He looks down to his gun. His eyes wander from his gun to Lily playing dead. Then, he looks up to see Tom back stage, relieved. Sam smiles as the curtains close. The applause goes on.